



Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

BELINDA COLE, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, AUSTRALIAN FROMELLES PROJECT GROUP, ARMY HEADQUARTERS, CAMPBELL PARK.

Dear Belinda,

Thank you for forwarding the UK article titled 'Piecing together the past' attached to an Email today and your acknowledgment of the continued interest of Fromelles Discussion Group in the First World War soldiers found at Pheasant Wood. The archival 'discovery' by Peter Barton is indeed wonderful news. There will be many military historians, family researchers and genealogists keenly awaiting the digitization of the records and the eventual release of this information to the public.

No doubt the Australian Army will also be keen to examine the Red Cross records more closely in an effort to locate other missing servicemen from this era, as the unearthing of this information finally corroborates theories there are other burial pits still awaiting discovery on the Western Front and reinforces the need espoused by this group, that Australia should develop a JPAC-style accounting operation similar to that used by the United States of America, to locate the graves of buried servicemen left after the war ended.

Hopefully the Rudd Labor Government will co-operate fully with the International Red Cross in Geneva with respect to the digitization of the records and, where possible, help to fund the project as well as provide other crucial resources, like expert conservators and archivists to enable the organization to meet the deadline of completing the task and placing the material online by 2014. Having revealed the existence of the historical archives, the Red Cross in Geneva as Peter suggests, is now faced with an unprecedented challenge and will need all the help it can get from governments worldwide to conserve this significant and invaluable collection.

In so far as the Australian Fromelles Project Group is concerned, Fromelles Discussion Group would be grateful to receive important news such as this in the future since you are offering to keep us informed of developments. However that said, I would like to point out this group is a collaboration and has always operated independently. This position has been maintained in spite of considerable pressure at times from various vested interests and so would be only too happy to be forwarded advisory communications, as long as you realize the group will maintain its non-aligned standing and impartiality.

Please forward our best wishes to Peter Barton and congratulate him on the fine work undertaken with the International Red Cross.

I would be grateful also if you would advise Army Headquarters that Fromelles Discussion Group would support the release of Peter Barton's reports into the German archives and the depository in Geneva. It would be reprehensible to say the least, to have this latest report shelved, withheld or quashed, in the context of the material already published by the BBC.

Regards Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group

Compiled on 13-MAR-09 and forwarded to Army Headquarters at 10:06 PM on the 15th instant, this Email to the Australian Fromelles Project Group is a reply to an UNCLASSIFIED electronic message from Communications Manager, Belinda Cole, which noted the continued interest of Fromelles Discussion Group in the recovery and re-interment of the First World War soldiers discovered at Fromelles.

Belinda kindly notified the group of the BBC News article about the decision of the International Red Cross to release its WWI archives, the submission of the latest report by British military historian Peter Barton, and also offered to keep Fromelles Discussion Group informed of developments.

Further detail about the decision by Red Cross Headquarters in Geneva can be found under Discussion Papers in the Quick Guide of this site.



The Fromelles Discussion Group aims to promote public debate on this important issue and by doing this, hopes to encourage a general exchange of ideas and information within the broader community.

Find the Fromelles Discussion Group at: www.FromellesDiscussionGroup.com and register your interest and support. Information or comment can be directed to the following E-mail address: info@FromellesDiscussionGroup.com.